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to them. In this, as in all things else, he shows his great want to have been the want of a heart. We scarcely know how better to close this view of his character, than, without meaning to excuse him, to apply his own remark upon a much bolder person than he in both extremes ; we mean his friend, Henry St. John, Lord Bolingbroke, when he says of him, — “ Upon the whole of this extraordinary character, where good and ill were perpetually jostling each other, what can we say but, Alas ! poor human nature ! ”

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ART. VII. — *A New Translation of the Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and the Canticles, with Introductions, and Notes, chiefly Explanatory.* By GEORGE R. NOYES, D. D., Hancock Professor of Hebrew, etc., and Dexter Lecturer in Harvard University. Boston : James Munroe & Co. 1846. 12mo. pp. 290.

OF Greek poetry earlier than Hesiod's Theogony we have only a few fragments, and those of doubtful genuineness ; and how gross are the religious ideas that pervade the Theogony few of our readers can need to be told. Its gods are base-born and depraved, clothed with every brutal and fiendish attribute ; and they are made to reach their respective seats of empire, and to attain their due prerogatives, only after a series of conflicts, a comparison with which might give dignity to a modern prize-fight, or attach tasteful associations to the passages at arms between the feline combatants that wrangle while we write. From a much earlier antiquity have come down to us the Psalms of David, and with them, in the historical books of the Jewish canon, numerous traits of the domestic and social condition of the Hebrews during David's reign, indicating a grossness and barbarity of taste, manners, and institutions vastly below the starting-point of authentic Greek history, and not many degrees in advance of the aborigines of North America. Yet to that rude age and people, and to their half-savage king, we are indebted for a collection of sublime religious lyrics, which bear up the soul of man, in harmony with the worship of universal nature, to the one omnipotent and all-pervading

Spirit, and which adequately express the most comprehensive views of the divine unity and sovereignty, and the deepest emotions of trust, gratitude, and praise, that can fill the Christian mind and heart. Whence this heaven-wide contrast? We can account for it only by supposing, that the warrior-king had access to fountains of higher inspiration than those that gushed from Helicon.

We might draw a similar inference from the translucency of the Psalms, and of the Hebrew poetry in general, through the most obscure and inaccurate version. These writings, hardly half "done into English" by King James's translators, often so rendered as not to suggest a tithe of the original signification, often gratuitously hampered with self-contradictions and perverted by gross anachronisms, are yet no less precious and nutritive to the pure and cultivated literary taste than they are to devotional feeling. Though uncounted gems of fancy, though metaphors more brilliant and graphic than all antiquity beside can furnish, lie buried beneath the rubbish of unmeaning words, still so much remains unhidden, so many are the traits of beauty and grandeur that flash perpetually upon the readers of our common English Bible, that it is often difficult to convince them that the sacred poets could be read through a clearer and more satisfying medium. There are no other writings extant, which could afford to part with so much of their significance and spirit in the process of transfusion, and still present themselves rich in all the highest attributes of true poetry.

But many portions of these writings are read aphoristically, and are understood and admired in single passages, sentences, and phrases, and not in the continuous flow of thought and imagery. Few merely English readers expect to derive connected or congruous ideas from an entire chapter of Isaiah or Ezekiel, or would think of the possibility of tracing an unbroken thread of thought from the top to the bottom of a page. Many of the passages from the prophets, which adhere to every one's memory, and are constantly quoted in the pulpit and in religious conversation, lie hemmed in between portions on which an impenetrable darkness rests, and, no doubt, equally rested to the eyes of our translators. Nor, in saying this, let us be understood as speaking reproachfully of those venerable men to whom

we are indebted for our vernacular version of the Bible. Their work was a remarkable one for their times, especially when we consider that they wrought it, not of their own free will, in the underived consciousness of adequate scholarship, but by the choice and bidding of the most foolish monarch that ever sat on the throne of England. But they had access to few philological aids in their study of the Jewish Scriptures. The critical knowledge of the Hebrew tongue, in its infancy on the continent of Europe, had hardly been sought in England; for previous professed translations from the Hebrew had leaned upon the Septuagint and the Vulgate. Nor did King James leave his translators the liberty, either to omit rendering passages which they found unintelligible, or to indicate by marginal notes when the words in the text were designed to mean nothing. Yet there are manifestly many instances in which they have purposely so thrown together English words and phrases, as to preclude the possibility of their suggesting any signification whatever.

What else can have been the design of the following sentence, from the description of the leviathan or crocodile in Job, — “Lay thine hand upon him, remember the battle, do no more” ? — a sentence which the grammatical construction, without violence, permits us to render, — “If thou lay thy hand upon him, thou wilt no more remember the battle.”\* For another specimen of the absolutely unintelligible in our common version, we might refer to a passage, the phraseology of which is familiar to every ear, but which suggests only two or three glimmerings of sense in a dreary waste of words; namely, the first five verses of the ninth chapter of Isaiah, constituting the greater part of the Christmas morning lesson in the services of the Episcopal Church. Our readers may perhaps have become so accustomed to the sound of these words, as to think that they understand them; but we would defy the most cunning “interpreter of dark sentences” to bring the last member of the third verse into harmony with the first, or to assign a meaning to the Italicized portion of the following sentence: — “Every

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\* This, or something similar, was the translation given by Dr. Noyes, in the first edition of his Job. On referring to his second edition, we find a much less significant rendering, and one for which, on examination of the Hebrew sentence, we can discover no philological grounds of preference.

battle of the warrior is with confused noise, and garments rolled in blood ; but *this shall be with burning and fuel of fire.*" We solicit a careful comparison between the common version of this passage, and the following by Dr. Noyes.

" But the darkness shall not remain where now is distress ;  
 Of old he brought the land of Zebulon and the land of Naph-  
 tali into contempt ;  
 In future times shall he bring the land of the sea, beyond Jor-  
 dan, the circle of the Gentiles, into honor.  
 The people, that walk in darkness, behold a great light ;  
 They, who dwell in the land of death-like shade,  
 Upon them a light shineth.  
 Thou enlargest the nation ;  
 Thou increasest their joy ;  
 They rejoice before thee with the joy of harvest,  
 With the joy of those who divide the spoil.  
 For thou breakest their heavy yoke,  
 And the rod, that smote their backs,  
 And the scourge of the taskmaster,  
 As in the day of Midian.  
 For the greaves of the warrior armed for the conquest,  
 And the war-garments, rolled in blood,  
 Shall be burned ; yea, they shall be food for the fire."

Then, too, in many passages, of which the main thought is clearly presented, our translators have inserted some irrelevant and unmeaning word or phrase, which the mind of the reader unconsciously omits and ignores, but which might be exchanged for one which would add new light and beauty to the sentiment. For instance, few probably have ever confessed to themselves that they do not fully understand the following verses from the nineteenth Psalm. " There is no speech nor language where their voice [that of the heavens, or the celestial luminaries] is not heard ; their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world." And yet we have asked more than a score of intelligent and cultivated people, whether they had ever attached any meaning to the word *line* ; and they have all confessed, both that they knew not what it meant, and that they had never discovered, till we made the inquiry, that it was void of meaning. Now the Hebrew word, thus rendered, does indeed denote a *measuring line*, but it also signifies a *musical chord* ; and through the neglect of this latter sense, the Psalm has been

stripped of one of the rarest gems of poetical fancy to be found in any language. By omitting the word *where*, which has been interpolated in Italics by the translators, to the perversion of the sense, which was complete without it, we may render the passage as follows : —

They [the heavens] have no speech nor language,  
No voice is heard from them ;  
Yet the chord of their harmony vibrates through the earth,  
Their notes reach the bounds of the universe.

Besides accurate translation of these ancient writings, English readers need a division and arrangement of them more consonant both with the genius of Hebrew poetry, and the scope of the respective writers, than our present chapters and verses, in which the *measuring-line* plays as impertinent and obtrusive a part as in the version of the psalm just quoted. Apart from the rhythm of the Hebrews, which it is idle to think of restoring, the essence of their poetry consists in a parallelism of sentiment, which unites two, three, or four versicles of nearly the same length into a *stichos*, or stanza. Sometimes one, two, or three versicles repeat the same sentiment in different words ; or, of four, the first corresponds to the third, and the second to the fourth. Sometimes the second member of the *stichos*, parallel in form, presents in thought a pointed antithesis to the first, or the third and fourth to the first and second. And then again, kindred, but not identical, sentiments are often thrown into couplets or triplets by a similarity of grammatical construction, and, so far as we have the means of judging, by an identity of rhythm. Now, all this parallelism is merged in our common system of verses, which groups together from two to five versicles, in the form of continuous prose, and with nothing, even in the pointing, to indicate the metrical divisions. The chapters, too, seldom coincide with the natural divisions of the respective books, while the brief summaries of contents prefixed to each chapter in our English Bibles generally display great carelessness, and are formed from the most superficial view of each chapter by itself, and not with reference to what precedes and follows. Now a great deal may be done for the satisfaction of the English reader by an arrangement which will represent the poetical structure of the original, and by

divisions corresponding with the actual sequence of subjects, together with a simple caption at the head of each section, to designate, in as few words as may be, not the possible or theoretical, but the actual and undoubted, purport of the section.

We have made these remarks to show how large a field of labor King James's translators left open to those who should succeed them. Their deficiencies, as we have said, belonged to their times and opportunities, rather than to the men. They did what they could, and more than there were *a priori* grounds for anticipating. And in one respect they have distanced all rivalry. They have clothed the Hebrew poets in a diction so full of euphony, majesty, and strength, as to make more accurate versions often seem tame and mean, and to constrain subsequent translators of taste to adhere to their phraseology, whenever there are not cogent reasons for departing from it. The author of a new translation must, then, be not only an acute and accomplished Hebrew scholar, but must also have at his command the richest materials of his own tongue, that his corrections of the established version may not seem insufferably harsh and flat by the side of those portions of its phraseology which he cannot help employing.

In this work, demanding at once so high attainments and so pure a taste, and on which many eminent men have entered with various degrees of success, we believe that the most careful critical comparison will award to Dr. Noyes the first honors. His versions of Job, the Psalms, and the Prophets, have been long before the public, and have already rendered edifying to hundreds of readers portions of the sacred volume which they had regarded as for ever sealed. No person of common intelligence will find it more difficult, by his aid, to follow a Hebrew prophet through his entire book, without dropping the thread of his discourse or encountering an utterly obscure sentence, than he will to trace the plot and to understand the successive portions of the *Paradise Lost*. Dr. Noyes's translation is always perspicuous and exact. He seldom deviates unnecessarily from the language of the common version; and his own words, both in their choice and their arrangement, display the most intimate conversance with the resources of the English tongue, a sound and discriminating taste, and a moderately good rhythmical ear. If we qualify our praise in any particular, it must be in this last. We some-

times find him employing words and phrases entirely in accordance with the best usage, which yet fail to ring upon the ear with the leaping, stirring melody of the established version. He sometimes uses words of Latin derivation, when he had better Saxon words at hand. In some instances, also, he translates into our English idiom Hebraisms, which are sufficiently well understood, and have incomparably more of euphony when literally rendered. These instances are, however, but few ; and because few, they are the more striking when they occur, from contrast with the generally elevated diction and spirited and melodious movement of the translation. In all of these works, the metrical arrangement of the original is strictly observed, and the text is broken into paragraphs and sections in accordance with the natural divisions, while the chapters and verses of the common system are marked in the margin for purposes of reference. Then there is prefixed to each of the books a brief introduction, exhibiting the results, without any of the parade, of learning, and presenting a synopsis of the facts, with reference to the external history of the work, with which the general reader needs to be acquainted. The notes are very few and short, adapted, with hardly an exception, to the comprehension and taste of the merely English reader, and for the most part either indicating the grounds of preference for the rendering given in the text, or explaining idiomatic or elliptical expressions, which could not have been unfolded in the text without an inadmissible periphrasis.

The volume now before us corresponds in its style of execution, and in its claims upon the public regard and gratitude, with those that preceded it. It makes with them a complete version of the poetical portion of the Hebrew canon. It hardly admits of criticism apart from the rest ; nor has the diligent perusal of all of them enabled us to pronounce either of them superior to the others in the traces of care, or skill, or learning. The series was not commenced till the author had made himself second to none in his qualifications for his task ; nor is it in his nature, or consonant with his rigid conscientiousness, so to lean on an established reputation as to remit in the last of the series any thing of that diligent elaboration which commended the first to universal favor.

In one point of view, indeed, the volume just issued might



seem of inferior importance, as less needed than the others. Undoubtedly, the book of Proverbs is better understood in the common version than any of the other poetical books. Yet still, there are many pearls there dropped, which Dr. Noyes has strung again, — many maxims, to which he has restored their native brilliancy and point, and converted them from homely truisms back to apophthegms equally original and striking, both in their artistical form and their ethical significance. This book deserves the most diligent attention and study, as a compend of the practical morality and piety which sprang from the Mosaic revelation. It exhibits both the preëminent ethical value of the Jewish theology beyond all other ancient religions, and, at the same time, its inadequacy to conduct the nation to that lofty spiritual stand-point which we owe to Him through whom immortality was at once revealed and made manifest. The collection is the more valuable, in this regard, from the fact, that it is not the work of one hand, but of at least five different authors or compilers, between the reigns of Solomon and Hezekiah, inclusive ; and that, therefore, it may be assumed as representing the moral tone and standard of the wisest and best men that flourished under the kings of Judah. It certainly adds abundant confirmation to the divine origin of the Jewish faith, while in its frequently superficial and external character, and in its many *lacunæ*, it indicates the need of the more comprehensive and profound ethics of the New Testament.

Ecclesiastes is supposed, from the Aramæan complexion of its language, to have been written after the Babylonish captivity, and probably at a later date than any other book of the Jewish canon. It could not have been the author's design to pass it off as the work of Solomon ; but, in giving the mature results of an extended experience of the wonders, pleasures, and vanities of life, he assumed the name and person of Solomon, as of an eminent historical character, within the range of whose powerful, prosperous, guilty, afflicted, penitent reign, every phasis of human experience might be naturally portrayed. This book is of kindred value with the Proverbs, as presenting views of human life which indicate far more breadth and justness of conception as to the aims and ends of life than could have been attained without the guidance of revelation, and yet illustrating man's intense need of full faith in immortality to cast light upon the dark passages,

the limitations, and the failures of his earthly pilgrimage. This work, in our established version, is exceedingly obscure ; and, in the original, its style is harsh, diffuse, and vague. On no portion of his labors can Dr. Noyes have found more need of elaborate study, and keen, critical acumen, than here ; and never before, as we believe, have the lucubrations of " the Preacher " been clothed in intelligible English. But here we hardly meet with a sentence that does not interpret itself at the first glance ; and the translation is so free from ambiguity in the text, as to render three fourths of the few notes appended to it superfluous. There are one or two instances, indeed, in which we should have preferred a different rendering, and could quote high critical authority in our favor ; but in every such case, Dr. Noyes has fortified his ground by substantial reasons. We quote the closing chapter as a specimen of the style of the translation, and the more readily, because, with all its acknowledged pathos and beauty, some portions of it bear but a dim and doubtful significance in our common version.

" Remember, also, thy Creator in the days of thy youth, before the evil days come, and the years draw nigh, of which thou shalt say, ' I have no pleasure in them ' ; before the sun, and the light, and the moon, and the stars become dark, and the clouds return after the rain ; at the time when the keepers of the house tremble, and the men of war bow themselves, and the grinders cease because they are few, and those that look out of the windows are darkened ; when the doors are shut in the streets, because the sound of the grinding is low ; when they rise up at the voice of the bird, and all the daughters of music are brought low ; when, also, they are afraid of that which is high, and terrors are in the way, and the almond is despised, and the locust is a burden, and the caper-berry fails ; since man goes to his long home, and the mourners go about the streets ; — before the silver cord be snapped, and the golden bowl be broken, or the bucket broken at the fountain, or the wheel broken at the well, and the dust return to the earth as it was, and the spirit return to God who gave it.

" Mere vanity, saith the Preacher, all is vanity !

" Moreover, because the Preacher was wise, he still taught the people knowledge ; yea, he considered, and sought out, and set in order, many proverbs. The Preacher sought to find out acceptable words, and the correct writing of words of truth. The words of the wise are as goads, yea, as driven nails are the words of members of assemblies, given by one teacher. And, more-

over, by these, my son, be warned! Of making many books there is no end, and much study wearies the flesh. Let us hear the end of the whole discourse! Fear God and keep his commandments! For this is the duty of all men. For God will bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil." — pp. 114, 115.

The Canticles, Dr. Noyes, in common with many critics of every denomination, supposes to be a collection of amatory idyls, written, if not by Solomon, at least in his reign, or soon after it. His translation of them is full of life and beauty. Though he assigns to them no mystical sense and no religious purpose, yet those who would spiritualize them so as to represent the relations of Christ and the church ought to attach a peculiar value to his version; for with them, a literal and perspicuous rendering is of course essential as a basis for their allegorical interpretations. But there is one consideration which perhaps renders these songs of still higher religious worth when we regard them as mere love-songs. We well know how much of manifest and glaring impurity there is in the amatory lyrics of ancient Greece and Rome. We have here, beyond a doubt, the favorite, so to speak, the classical, love-songs of the Hebrews; and we find them, though in one or two instances marked by a license of speech inconsistent with modern notions of propriety, yet, so free from every thing absolutely gross or necessarily indelicate, that they still retain a seldom challenged place between the same covers with the Psalms and the Gospels, and suggest only associations of devoted piety and high religious fervor to many of the purest and best minds of the race. How shall we account for this contrast, except by supposing even the lighter literature of the Hebrews to have been held in check by that sound moral principle, and elevated religious sentiment, which could have flowed only from divine inspiration?

We regard these works of Dr. Noyes, not only as worthy and useful in a religious point of view, but as among the ripest fruits of American scholarship, and the most valuable contributions to American literature. They have won for him the highest reputation, both at home and abroad, and have received the warmest praise from critics of various denominations. They must take their place on that brief list of sacred classics that will not need expurgation, till the language in which they are written grows obsolete.